

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 0339

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MOPS, PFOR, CB, US

SUBJECT: IMPENDING AMMO FUNDING CRISIS

1. SUMMARY. THE JANUARY 1 KC DRY SEASON OFFENSIVE HAS CAUSED FANK TO INCREASE ITS RATE OF AMMUNITION EXPENDITURE. UNDER FY 1975 FUNDING, FANK WILL RUN OUT OF BOTH MONEY AND STOCKS BY EARLY THIS APRIL EVEN IF IT HOLDS CONSUMPTION TO THE SAME LEVEL AS THAT DURING THE SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR. END SUMMARY.

2. THE KC OFFENSIVE HAS SHATTERED FANK'S AMMO CONSERVATION PROGRAM. FROM MID-AUGUST TO DECEMBER, 1974 FANK'S AMMO CONSUMPTION STEADILY DECREASED DUE TO IMPLEMENTATION OF STRICT CONSERVATION. FOR THE WEEK DECEMBER 21-27 FANK REACHED THE CONSERVATION TARGET AS IT EXPENDED ONLY 275 SHORT TONS PER DAY OF VARIOUS AIR AND GROUND MUNITIONS. THE JANUARY 1 KC OFFENSIVE, HOWEVER, HAS FORCED FANK TO INCREASE THE ISSUE OF AMMO FROM DEPOT STOCKS TO 344 SHORT TONS PER DAY FOR THE WEEK DECEMBER 28- JANUARY 3. THIS FIGURE IS PROBABLY LESS THAN THE AMMO ACTUALLY FIRED BECAUSE UNITS KEEP AN AUTHORIZED BASIC LOAD ON HAND. THE ASSUMPTION IS THAT ALL AMMO ISSUED AND ON HAND IS USED

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DURING PERIODS OF HIGH ACTIVITY. MOREOVER, THE WEEK IN-

CLUDED ONLY THREE DAYS OF THE OFFENSIVE AND EXPENDITURE FIGURES ARE THEREFORE MISLEADINGLY LOW. THE DEPOTS ISSUED AMMUNITION AT 475 TONS PER DAY FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1-3.

3. WE ANTICIPATE THAT AS THE OFFENSIVE CONTINUES AMMO EXPENDITURE WILL JUMP TO 600 SHORT TONS PER DAY (EQUAL TO THAT DURING THE JANUARY AND FEBRUARY, 1974 OFFENSIVE) AND MAY GO AS HIGH AS 700 TONS PER DAY. THE PERIOD OF HIGH EXPENDITURES SHOULD CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME AFTER FANK RESTORES THE STATUS QUO AROUND PHNOM PENH BECAUSE HARD FIGHTING WILL BE NEEDED TO REOPEN THE LOWER MEKONG TO ENABLE CONVOYS TO PASS SAFELY. INFLUENCING AMMO USE IN 1975 ARE: A) AN INCREASE IN THE 105MM HOWITZERS OVER THE PAST YEAR. AMMO FOR 105'S IS THE SINGLE MOST EXPENSIVE MUNITIONS ITEMS AND ON JANUARY 5 ALONE, FANK FIRED 225 TONS OF 105 MM AMMO AROUND PHNOM PENH; THIS FIGURE DOES NOT RPT NOT INCLUDE ARTILLERY EXPENDITURE BY THE HARD-PRESSED 7TH DIVISION.

B) ALTHOUGH THE AIR FORCE WAS WELL INTO ITS IMPROVEMENT PLAN LAST YEAR, TACTICAL AIR SORTIES ARE NOW RUNNING AROUND 170 PER DAY WITH NECESSARILY INCREASED EXPENDITURE. THE AIR FORCE USED 52 TONS PER DAY BETWEEN DECEMBER 28-JANUARY 3. ROCKET-FIRING HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS HAVE GREATLY INCREASED THEIR CAPABILITY AND ROCKETS ARE VERY EXPENSIVE ITEMS COMPARED WITH OTHER AIR MUNITIONS.

C) WHILE KAF AND FANK ARE CAPABLE OF USING UP FAR MORE AMMUNITION THIS YEAR THAN IN 1974, BOTH ARE NOW FULLY AWARE OF THE NEED FOR AMMO CONSERVATION. MOREOVER, KAF NOW HAS GOOD FORWARD AIR CONTROLLERS WHO MAKE FOR MORE EFFECTIVE USE OF AIRSTRIKES AND ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENTS. BOTH POINTS SHOULD HELP LIMIT AVERAGE EXPENDITURE OVER THIS DRY SEASON TO EQUAL OR SLIGHTLY EXCEED THAT OF 1974 DESPITE THE GREATER CAPABILITY.

5. UNFORTUNATELY INFLATION HAS INCREASED MUNITIONS COSTS TO THE POINT THAT EQUALING LAST YEAR'S EXPENDITURE RATE WILL BANKRUPT THE MAP PROGRAM BY APRIL UNDER CURRENT FUNDING. THE MAP GUIDELINE FOR THE FIRST FIVE MONTHS OF FY 1975 WAS \$362.5 MILLION; HOWEVER, THE FOREIGN
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ASSISTANCE ACT PASSED IN DECEMBER AUTHORIZED ONLY A \$200 MILLION MAP PLUS DRAWDOWN AUTHORITY FOR \$75 MILLION INFY 1975. EXPENSES FOR THE FIRST TWO QUARTERS HAVE LEFT ONLY \$85.5 MILLION (INCLUDING EXCESS STOCKS) FOR AMMUNITION FOR THE LAST HALF OF FY 1975. IF WE ASSUME AN OPTIMISTIC RATE OF 500 SHORT TONS FIRED OR AIRDROPPED PER DAY, MAP WILL BE OUT OF MONEY AND THE MAIN DEPOTS OUT OF AMMO BY APRIL 15. IF CONSUMPTION JUMPS TO 700

TONS PER WEEK, MONEY AND STOCKS WILL RUN OUT A MONTH EARLIER.

6. COMMENT: WHILE THE ABOVE IS HARDLY ENCOURAGING, THE AMMO SITUATION COULD BECOME CRITICAL AT ANY TIME WITH A SUCCESSFUL SAPPER OR ROCKET ATTACK ON THE MAJOR FANK DEPOT AT KANTAU, JUST WEST OF PHNOM PENH. (ROCKETS HAVE HIT THE DEPOT TWICE SINCE JANUARY 1 WITHOUT AMMO LOSSES).
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